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Enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination, including the provision of further guidance to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests

Collaborative Partnership on Forests Framework 2011 and 2012

Report by the Secretariat

Summary

The present report provides an overview of the activities and accomplishments of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in 2011 and 2012 towards meeting its two-fold objective, namely, to support the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests and its member countries and to enhance forest cooperation and coordination among members of the Partnership. The Partnership does not have dedicated financing, and faces funding challenges.

There was a significant increase in outputs of the Partnership during the period compared with those outlined in its previous report (E/CN.18/2011/11). Among those outputs were a 2012 study by the Advisory Group on Finance of the Partnership and other forest finance-related activities; the promotion of the International Year of Forests in 2011; and issuance of an e-booklet on "Rio+20 and Forests" and a series of eight fact sheets on aspects of sustainable forest management. The Partnership also agreed to change the annual Forest Day event into a landscape day, with the aim of addressing forests and agriculture through a cross-sectoral approach. Close collaboration in the Partnership also contributed to the adoption of General Assembly resolution 67/200 on the International Day of Forests. In addition, members of the Partnership presented the first Wangari Maathai Award.

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The Partnership continued to develop and expand existing initiatives, including the Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting, the forest degradation initiative, the Global Forest Expert Panels and the Global Forest Information Service. Recognizing the importance of cross-sectoral solutions to sustainable forest management, members cooperated on a variety of additional issues, such as forest landscape restoration, forest governance and law enforcement and forestry education. Cross-sectoral linkages are becoming increasingly crucial to the achievement of forest management goals.

I. Introduction

1. The present report presents an overview of the activities undertaken by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its achievements in response to the resolutions and decisions of the United Nations Forum on Forests. Established by the Economic and Social Council in October 2000 (resolution 2000/35) to operate under the guidance of the Forum, the Partnership brings together 14 international forest-related organizations, instruments and secretariats[1] to support the work of the Forum and its member countries and to enhance forest cooperation and coordination among the members of the Partnership.

2. To further advance its common mission to promote the sustainable management of all types of forests and strengthen long-term political commitment to that end, the Partnership organized a retreat in June 2011 to define its work for 2011-2012. The work plan of the Partnership focused on the invitations it had received from the Forum at its ninth session and on the 2011 Ministerial declaration (E/2011/42-E/CN.18/2011/20, para. 1), along with other developments and outputs from major intergovernmental processes.

II. Update on progress in 2011 and 2012: joint initiatives of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in support of the resolutions and decisions of the United Nations Forum on Forests

3. The present section includes the achievements of the Partnership in support of the work of the Forum since its previous report (E/CN.18/2011/11), presented to the Forum at its ninth session, held in 2011.

A. Responding to invitations from the United Nations Forum on Forests at its ninth session

1. Forest finance

4. Mobilizing and providing access to financial resources for forests remains a significant challenge for many countries. For close to a decade, members of the Partnership have been working on a full range of forest financing activities to improve data collection and access to forest finance flows, facilitate knowledge exchange, build expertise and develop stakeholder capacities in mobilizing and accessing funds. Actions have also focused on creating small-scale market

[1] The Centre for International Forestry Research, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Tropical Timber Organization, the International Union of Forest Research Organizations, the secretariat of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Agroforestry Centre, the World Bank and the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

opportunities and promoting investments, not only in wood production, but also to account for other forest values and benefits.

5. Given their expertise and knowledge, member organizations of the Partnership received an invitation from the Forum at its ninth session, in 2011, to report to it at its tenth session, in 2013, on their ongoing work and future actions on forest finance and to deepen and broaden their work in support of actions to finance sustainable forest management.

6. The Partnership was invited to convene an organization-led initiative on forest financing in support of the work of the Forum and to support the implementation of all functions of the facilitative process of the Forum. The Advisory Group on Finance of the Partnership, composed of 12 of its member organizations,[2] was also invited to carry out work during the intersessional period between the ninth and tenth sessions of the Forum.

7. In response, the Partnership convened a two-day retreat in June 2011, in Orvieto, Italy, where it reached an agreement on its workplan for 2011 and 2012, including its contributions to activities related to forest financing, the workplan of the Advisory Group on Finance and the venue and date for the organization-led initiative.

8. The secretariat of the Forum played a lead agency role in coordinating the workplan of the Advisory Group, which included updating and expanding the 2008 study of the Advisory Group on forest financing and organizing the substantive preparations for the organization-led initiative, in consultation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other members of the Advisory Group. Its 2012 study (available from www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/AGF_Study_July_2012.pdf) took one year to complete, from June 2011 to June 2012, and involved intensive inter-agency collaboration. Contributions from FAO, the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification/Global Mechanism, the secretariat of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the World Bank were constructive in preparing the 2012 study.[3]

9. The organization-led initiative, held at FAO headquarters in Rome in September 2012, was enabled in part by the generous contributions of a few donors and by active fundraising on the part of the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests and FAO. It was attended by about 150 experts from 69 countries and 21 regional and international organizations and major group stakeholders. Nearly all members of the Partnership attended. Keynote and panel discussions were held throughout the two days, with the 2012 study of the Advisory Group on Finance

[2] The secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests, FAO, the World Bank, GEF, the International Tropical Timber Organization, the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the International Council for Research in Agroforestry, the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Center for International Forestry Research, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, UNEP and the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification/Global Mechanism.

[3] In accordance with the resolution of the ninth session of the Forum (see E/2011/42-E/CN.18/2011/20, para. 2), input focused on forest financing trends and potential with regard to climate change, biological diversity, sustainable land and forest management, land degradation and desertification, financial resources associated with the processes of forest law and governance, and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and capacity-building.

serving as the basis for discussions during the meeting. As a result, new work has emerged among Partnership members on forest finance to address gaps in data and reporting on the cash and non-cash contributions of forests.

10. The input of Partnership members is captured in the summary of the Co-Chairs of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests organization-led initiative on Forest Financing (see E/CN.18/AEG/2013/2) and the 2012 study of the Advisory Group on Finance. In 2011 and 2012, several members also provided input and support to the facilitative process workshops of the Forum on small island developing States and low forest cover countries. Further details concerning the summary of the Co-Chairs, the 2012 study and results of the facilitative process are included in the report of the Secretary-General on means of implementation for sustainable forest management (E/CN.18/2013/11).

11. The 2012 study of the Advisory Group on Finance was recognized as a rich source of information for the organization-led initiative and for the second meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on Forest Financing of the Forum, held in Vienna in January 2013 (see www.un.org/esa/forests/adhoc.html).

12. Members of the Partnership continued to provide support on the issue of forest financing at the second meeting of the Ad Hoc Expert Group. Besides presenting key recommendations of the 2012 study of the Advisory Group on Finance, several members shared their ongoing work on the subject with participants and contributed significantly to the discussions and deliberations of the meeting. The need was reiterated for the Partnership's member organizations to continue to support its member countries in order to strengthen forest finance, including the building of the necessary capacities at the country level. The report of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on Forest Financing on its second meeting is contained in document E/CN.18/2013/12.

13. Despite the successes, it is important to note that financing to carry out such requests was significantly limited, which caused extreme pressure to be put on the lead agency to carry out the tasks. Further guidance from the Forum is therefore needed to remedy this situation in the future.

2. Reporting on the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and streamlining reporting formats

14. In 2011, targeted collaboration between the secretariat of the Forum and FAO focused on harmonizing the reporting formats of the Forum to improve data collection and analysis as well as improve understanding of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (the forest instrument) (see General Assembly resolution 62/98, annex) and its implementation at the country level.

15. A series of regional workshops on national reporting, conducted jointly by the secretariat of the Forum and FAO, played a key role in that regard. The workshops, funded through the United Nations Development Account, aimed at strengthening reporting capacities in developing countries and countries with economies in transition by presenting guidelines and measures for implementation, forest-related definitions and monitoring, reporting and assessment tools. Following the successful implementation of the workshops, the secretariat of the Forum developed a streamlined reporting format that, to date, has led to 55 countries submitting

national reports to the Forum at its tenth session. The number of submitted reports has more than tripled in comparison with the previous two sessions.

16. The workshops also helped to build greater awareness of the importance of the implementation of the forest instrument. That resulted in an increase in interest from China, Gabon, India, Mongolia, Nigeria, Swaziland and Zambia to implement the instrument with support from FAO, and continued support to the initial four FAO pilot projects on the implementation of the instrument in Ghana, Liberia, Nicaragua and the Philippines, with support from the Governments of Germany and Japan.

17. Greater support from the Partnership on utilizing national forest programmes and other strategies for sustainable forest management to further implement the forest instrument in the current and future country pilot projects will be given significant attention over the next biennium. It is also expected that this work will generate a collaborative basis for further work between the secretariat of the Forum and FAO to explore potential approaches to incorporate the elements of the instrument and the global objectives on forests into the 2014 report on the *State of the World's Forests*. In 2012, FAO provided a secondment to the secretariat of the Forum to contribute to the reporting work of the Forum and FAO. FAO will continue this support through most of 2013.

18. The Partnership as a whole has continued to look at new approaches to reduce the reporting burden on countries. Mindful of the reporting requests made by the Forum on Forests at its ninth session and other governing bodies of Partnership members, the Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting (www.cpfweb.org/73035/en) met in Rome in April 2012. The meeting, hosted by FAO as the Task Force Chair, included representatives of the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Forum on Forests and the World Conservation Monitoring Centre of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).[4] The overall objective was to identify ways and means to reduce country reporting burdens and improve the quality of data and analysis.

19. At the meeting, representatives of the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment Programme informed Task Force members of the progress made on joint data collection through the collaborative forest resources questionnaire, produced by FAO and regional data collection partners. The potential for the questionnaire to streamline forest-related reporting and further engage intergovernmental processes, including the Forum, to support joint data collection and analysis was also discussed. In that regard, information was shared by Task Force members on their plans to harmonize country reporting requirements, including variables and timing, in their respective governing bodies. The questionnaire is already being used by Forest Europe, the Montreal Process, FAO, the Economic Commission for Europe, the International Tropical Timber Organization and the Observatory for the Forests of Central Africa, and the data collected will contribute to the assessment of the international arrangement on forests in 2015.

20. Given the evolving needs and priorities of countries, members decided to update the terms of reference of the Task Force and develop a workplan for

[4] Of the seven Task Force members, the International Tropical Timber Organization and the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification could not participate.

2012-2015, including operational aspects, with a roster of reporting experts, opportunities for joint meetings and capacity-building activities. The workplan also addressed strategic priorities on the use of forest resources assessment indicators, including the creation of "soft indicators" to review the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests.

21. A high priority on the agenda of the Partnership will be preparations for the 2015 effectiveness review, taking into account the pace of events and developments in other major intergovernmental processes, including the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. Since these processes set out to devise a new development vision after 2015, it is critical for the Partnership to provide both technical and strategic input from a broad natural resource perspective.

3. Demonstrating the full value of forests through a cross-sectoral approach

22. The Partnership has for several years promoted a landscape approach across sectors to optimize the linkage among land management, agriculture, forests and water, integrate natural resource issues and ensure biodiversity safeguards, climate change mitigation and people's resilience to unforeseeable changes in the environment.

23. By promoting an agriculture-forest interface, the Partnership has demonstrated the potential of forests in restoring depleted lands, supporting sustainable agricultural productivity and the preservation of biodiversity, contributing to poverty and hunger eradication and achieving a greener economy. The importance of such linkages was emphasized in the inputs of the Partnership to side events at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

24. The area of agroforestry is receiving growing attention from many sectors, while the area of food security has served as a bridge linking the energy, agriculture, forestry, environment and development sectors. Trees on farms enhance food security directly through the production of fruits, nuts and edible leaves, while "fertilizer trees" indirectly enhance food security through increased crop production and "fodder trees" increase milk and animal production. Income from trees on farms and forests is also significant and can be used to purchase food. Forests also provide environmental benefits that are vital for agriculture, from watershed protection to the prevention of soil erosion and climate regulation. Agroforestry policy guidelines were produced in 2012 by FAO in collaboration with the International Council for Research in Agroforestry to enable countries to develop and promote policies that encourage tree cultivation in order to stem forest degradation and deforestation. Complementary to this, guidelines on the assessment of tree resources outside forests were also developed.

25. The Partnership has been attentive to how a likely increase in human population, economic challenges, natural disasters and climate change impacts could influence the reliance of local communities on other forest types and woodlands in different regions. In that regard, it has begun to explore areas for cooperation on drylands and wetlands. Individual initiatives from specific Partnership member organizations related to the cash and non-cash values of forests are covered in the report of the Secretary-General on forests and economic development (E/CN.18/2013/4).

B. Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015: positioning forests at the centre of the sustainable development agenda

26. At its 2011 retreat in preparation for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the Partnership identified a number of activities to provide country-based analyses demonstrating the multiple functions and values of forests and their contribution to sustainable development.

27. The Partnership's official contribution to the preparatory process for the Conference, entitled "The Earth Summit 2012 and forests", was submitted to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in November 2011. Given its strategic message, the Partnership decided to expand the submission into an e-booklet, underscoring existing cases, on how to approach twenty-first century challenges from the forest sector and scale up efforts in other sectors.

28. The e-booklet was presented at the Conference during a high-level side event organized by the Partnership, which included the current and former Presidents of Guyana, the Secretary of Biodiversity and Forests of the Ministry of Environment of Brazil, the Minister of the Republic of Korea Forest Service, the Director General of the Forestry Commission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the heads of the Partnership member organizations. The event included a depiction of the importance of an integrated management approach and cross-sectoral coordination and included insightful country experiences on how to operationalize the concept of sustainable development with respect to natural resources.

29. The secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests, on behalf of the Partnership, provided substantive support to the negotiations on the outcome document of the Conference, specifically the section on forests, during the preparatory process and the Conference itself. The secretariat also played an important role in facilitating the inclusion of a consensus agreement on forests in the outcome document.

30. In the outcome document, the importance of sustainable forest management in meeting many of the most pressing sustainable development challenges was stressed. Reference was made to the Forum, with its universal membership, comprehensive mandate and vital role in addressing forest-related issues in a holistic and integrated manner and promoting international policy coordination and cooperation to achieve sustainable forest management. In that context, the Partnership was invited to continue its support to the Forum and through the governing bodies of its member organizations to integrate, as appropriate, the sustainable management of all types of forests into their strategies and programmes.

31. In the light of the potential implications of certain Conference outcomes on forests, the Partnership is actively following the debate on sustainable development goals and the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. At its December 2012 meeting in Doha, the Partnership designated the secretariat of the Forum on Forests to produce a concept note on the matter, to be submitted to the Partnership prior to the tenth session of the Forum, to be held in April 2013 in Istanbul, Turkey. The report of the Secretary-General on the international arrangement on forests, the

post-2015 United Nations development agenda and the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (E/CN.18/2013/6) includes an initial assessment of the implications of the outcome of the Conference and the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015 for the international arrangement on forests.

C. Communication and outreach

1. International Year of Forests: thematic issues

32. The Partnership's outreach and awareness-raising campaign during the International Year of Forests was a unique collaborative effort that drew significant attention to a number of forest-related issues around the world. The Partnership Communicators Group, led by FAO, the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests and the Center for International Forestry Research met periodically throughout the year to discuss approaches to maximizing the outreach of the Partnership, including through a series of press releases, joint videos and events.

33. Members identified a total of 24 forest-related thematic issues that were featured in joint press releases issued in 2011 to convey shared messages on forests. The process for identifying the issues took into account their relevance and the value they would add to other forest-related events. The press releases contained messages that had a strong cross-sectoral appeal and, as a result, many releases were picked up by broader media providers and channels of distribution.

34. The Communicators Group continued to meet in 2012 to discuss follow-up actions from the International Year of Forests, the rebranding of the Partnership and improved use of its website to continue the momentum gained in 2011.

2. International Day of Forests

35. The meaningful participation of different stakeholders in the year-long celebrations of the International Year of Forests in 2011 provided a strong impetus to continue to recognize the innate relationship between people and forests. The awareness generated throughout 2011, along with the feedback and experiences from countless people from all walks of life, was significant evidence of the value attached to forests and their resources.

36. At its ninth session, the Forum recommended that the Council, and, through it, the General Assembly, consider the establishment of an International Day of Forests, with the aim of recognizing the significant contribution of forests to sustainable development, the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals and the corresponding need to strengthen the sustainable management of all types of forests for the benefit of current and future generations. The Conference of FAO at its thirty-seventh session,[5] supported the idea of the International Day, following earlier decisions in November 1971 by which it had endorsed the establishment of World Forestry Day on 21 March of each year.

[5] See Report of the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, thirty-seventh session, Rome, 25 June-2 July 2011 (C 2011/REP) (available from www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/023/mb767e.pdf).

37. Through the concerted efforts of the secretariat of the Forum on Forests, FAO and other members of the Communicators Group, the General Assembly adopted resolution 67/200, in which it proclaimed 21 March of each year the International Day of Forests. Further information about the International Day of Forests is contained in the note by the Secretariat on the International Year of Forests 2011 activities (E/CN.18/2013/9).

3. Wangari Maathai Award

38. Drawing from the success of the International Year of Forests in 2011, the Chair of the Partnership made a proposal, which was accepted by the members, to expand the work of the Communicators Group by adding a new award honouring the life and work of Wangari Maathai. The Center for International Forestry Research, the International Council for Research in Agroforestry, the International Tropical Timber Organization, FAO, the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests, the International Union of Forest Organizations and UNEP contributed to the financing of the Wangari Maathai Award in 2012.

39. The 2012 Wangari Maathai Award was presented at a ceremony held in Rome in September, as part of the twenty-first session of the Committee on Forestry and the third World Forest Week. The first prize was awarded to Narayan Kaji Shrestha for his efforts in forming and promoting community forestry in Nepal and internationally. His dedicated work in guiding efforts to create a more participatory approach to community decision-making, reaching out to women and villagers of lower castes led to the initiation of the first user-managed community forestry group in Nepal.

40. The jury also gave an honourable mention prize to Kurshida Begum of Bangladesh for forming a female community patrol group that operates alongside forest department guards to protect the Tenkaf Wildlife Sanctuary forest and its biodiversity from illegal logging and poaching. Her work has helped women gain an effective voice in their community, providing them with a steady source of income. The results of the Award are an indication that the efforts that Wangari Maathai made in Africa are reaching other parts of the world.

4. Fifth and sixth Forest Days and the creation of Landscape Day

41. The Partnership's Forest Day, led by the Center for International Forestry Research, has become an important discussion forum and networking opportunity on forests. Its success is due to many factors, including effective planning, coordination and communications, rapid response to demands and availability of new information on the role of forests in the mitigation and adaptation to climate change, and collaborative efforts among members of the Partnership.

42. The two most recent Forest Days were critical to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process in many ways. The issues raised at the fifth Forest Day, held in Durban, South Africa, in 2011, contributed to the agenda of the seventeenth Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention and raised awareness of forest stakeholders of ways to implement the REDD-plus agreement that had been reached in 2010 in Cancún, Mexico, to produce social and environmental benefits, and integrate forests into adaptation strategies on the ground. Organizers, including Partnership members, gave special attention to issues relevant to sub-Saharan Africa, to REDD-plus in the humid forest of the Congo

Basin and to the improved management and use of Africa's dryland forests areas for mitigation and adaptation. Also, for the first time, the fifth Forest Day included a special focus on gender.

43. The organization and delivery of the sixth Forest Day, held in December 2012, in Doha, relied to an even greater extent on the participation of non-members of the Partnership. While building on the success of the previous five events, it included an acknowledgement of the need for a landscape-based approach with a focus on synergies and trade-offs to better manage a range of resources, while providing solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation. Along those lines, it was decided that Forest Day would be combined with the Agriculture, Landscapes and Livelihoods Day. The events would be held on consecutive days at a shared venue. The results of a survey on the sixth Forest Day will be made available in 2013 to determine its outputs and the effect of its new structure and design.

44. Against that backdrop, two major decisions regarding the future of Forest Day were announced at the sixth Forest Day. First, the Partnership agreed that the Center for International Forestry Research, acting on behalf of the Partnership, would join forces with the research programme on climate change, agriculture and food security of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, acting on behalf of the sponsors of Agriculture, Landscapes and Livelihoods Day, to create a new, combined event to be known as Landscape Day at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that would integrate forests and forestry within the wider development agenda of landscapes for sustainable development and climate mitigation and adaptation. Second, the Partnership noted that future Forest Days would be held outside of the Conference of the Parties, reaching beyond REDD-plus and climate change to encompass broader issues and stakeholders.

45. In 2013 and 2014, important details will be addressed concerning the governance structure of future Landscape Days and Forest Days in the context of the Partnership's work. While this organizational shift provides new opportunities to reach across sectoral boundaries on integrated approaches and policy measures to sustainably manage natural resources, further analysis and discussion will be required on the implications of its broader scope and expected outcomes.

5. Website and new logo of the Partnership

46. Building on the achievements of 2011, the Partnership Communicators Group identified additional activities and products ranging from joint films and video releases to a number of interviews and opinion pieces featured in publications, journals and articles. Most of the outputs are available on the Partnership's redesigned and updated website, hosted by FAO (www.cpfweb.org).

47. In addition, FAO facilitated discussions among members of the Partnership to select its new logo, working hand-in-hand with professional designers to rebrand the Partnership. The logo was in full use by 2011. In conjunction with the redesign of the Partnership's website, FAO, on behalf of the Partnership and with assistance of the Global Forest Information Service, worked to optimize existing databases and events calendars to generate and share the most relevant information on forests, and will continue that work in 2013.

D. Advancing a common message on sustainable forest management

48. In June 2012, the Partnership Working Group on Advancing a Common Message on Sustainable Forest Management, led by the International Tropical Timber Organization and the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and represented by all Partnership members, released a set of eight fact sheets on sustainable forest management, in English, French and Spanish. The International Tropical Timber Organization, UNEP, FAO and the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification/Global Mechanism provided significant support to this work.

49. Drawing from the General Assembly definition of sustainable forest management as a dynamic and evolving concept that aims to maintain and enhance the economic, social and environmental values of all types of forests, for the benefit of present and future generations, the fact sheets depict relevant sustainable forest management aspects, including the multiple functions of forests, primary forests, food security and livelihoods, indigenous peoples, REDD-plus, biodiversity, gender and adaptation to climate change. They also emphasize the important role of forests and sustainable forest management for human well-being, sustainable development and a low carbon bio-based economy.

50. Serving as a useful reference point for many stakeholders, the fact sheets have presented a clear analysis of the role of forests in sustainable development and green growth approaches. They have helped to demonstrate complex and often marginalized issues through real topical examples.

51. The Partnership has already started to identify additional sustainable forest management fact sheets for preparation and dissemination in the biennium 2013-2014.

III. Additional joint initiatives of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests

A. Forest degradation initiative

52. Forest degradation is a serious problem that not only fuels carbon emissions and climate change, but eliminates habitats for plants and animals and results in soil erosion and siltation of rivers and streams. It also often destroys the livelihoods of poor forest-dependent people.

53. Members of the Partnership, led by FAO, prepared studies to identify potential parameters and best practices for assessing the information gaps on forest degradation. Released in 2011, a brochure entitled "Measuring forest degradation" described the persistent challenges in the field. It also provided recommendations for monitoring the state of changes in forests for the development of measures that could lead to the restoration of degraded forests and the rehabilitation of degraded forest lands.

54. In addition, a FAO working paper entitled "Assessing forest degradation: towards the development of globally applicable guidelines" provides stakeholders with information on measuring forest degradation using the four key criteria of growing stock and biomass, biodiversity, production of forest goods and soil

erosion. FAO will include data on some of the indicators of degradation in its *Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015*.

B. Global Forest Expert Panels initiative and its third thematic assessment report

55. The Global Forest Expert Panels initiative was established within the framework of the Partnership and is led and coordinated by the International Union of Forest Research Organizations. It builds on the political recognition provided by the United Nations Forum on Forests and decision IX/16 of the ninth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

56. The mission of the Global Forest Expert Panels is to support the Forum on Forests and other forest-related intergovernmental processes by assessing available scientific information in a comprehensive, interdisciplinary, objective, open and transparent way and by producing reports on forest-related issues of high concern, including emerging issues.

57. In 2011, the United Nations Forum on Forests at its ninth session invited the Partnership to continue to provide scientific information relevant to the themes of future sessions of the Forum, through modalities, including the Global Forest Expert Panels. Contributing to intergovernmental discussions on climate change and biodiversity conservation, the Panels released a full assessment report in 2012, entitled "Understanding Relationships between Biodiversity, Carbon, Forests and People: The Key to Achieving REDD+ Objectives". Preliminary results of the assessment were presented at the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Hyderabad, India, in October 2012, and the official report was released on the sixth Forest Day, in the margins of the eighteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Doha in November 2012. The full report has been endorsed by all Partnership members and the summarized policy brief is recognized as a document of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations.

C. Global Forest Information Service

58. The Global Forest Information Service, a Partnership initiative since 2004 led by the International Union of Forest Research Organizations, brings forest-related information from a network of partners to stakeholders through a single web-accessible gateway. Users of the service can easily navigate and access relevant forest and tree-related information, including news, events, publications and job vacancies. Data made available through the Service have grown to encompass information supplied by over 400 partner institutions from around the world.

59. Building on a common standard for sharing forest-related information resources, data is aggregated using online syndication methods to make the latest information automatically available on the gateway. The Global Forest Information Service promotes this collectively agreed upon system of web-based tools for information exchange and dissemination. It also draws on the participation of

information providers and users through capacity-building measures, networking and partnership for sharing forest-related information.

60. With a growing number of information providers, the Partnership has benefited from the Global Forest Information Service gateway to improve the functionality of its own website. The International Union of Forest Research Organizations has been actively overcoming challenges related to the evolving nature of technologies and tools for managing meta-database information resources. Nevertheless, the greater involvement of Partnership members' website content feeds and additional resources to better manage information technology among member organizations has been encouraged in 2013.

IV. Other collaborative activities

61. Given the wide range of issues related to sustainable forest management, members regularly engage in other collaborative activities outside the Partnership's workplan for 2011 and 2012.

62. Recognizing the importance of cross-sectoral solutions to sustainable forest management, several members have invested significant time and resources in the planning, funding and implementation of activities related to the Global Forest Partnership on Landscape Restoration, forest law enforcement and governance, including combating illicit international trafficking in forest products, education and learning platforms, to strengthen Partnership engagement with stakeholders. Studies were carried out by some members on forests, fragility and conflict, and alternative REDD-plus financing regimes. Additional work included guidelines on assessing public expenditure in the forests sector, an analysis of benefit-sharing opportunities resulting from forest management and support towards the development of networks of small and medium-sized forest enterprises.

V. Strengthening the working methods of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests

63. In response to the growing number of invitations to the Partnership from the United Nations Forum on Forests and other intergovernmental processes, the Partnership revisited its working modalities at its 2011 retreat, building on the existing modalities of 2002. The importance of sustained and high-level participation in Partnership meetings was strongly emphasized.

64. So far, the joint initiatives of the Partnership and other functions have been possible because of voluntary contributions from members, who assigned their staff and utilized external resources for specific tasks. However, that approach has proved extremely difficult to continue owing to resource limitations and the other mandated activities of the members of the Partnership. Ensuring sustained financial resources for Partnership members to support its workplan in responding to the decisions and invitations of the Forum will be critical in the biennium 2013-2014, especially ahead of the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests. Without sustained financial resources, the Partnership's ability to take on additional requests could be limited, jeopardizing the progress it has already made.

65. To that end, the Partnership agreed to continue to structure its workplan, not only to set out what it could commit to and deliver, but also to report on its funding needs in order to undertake such activities. Partnership members have been reminded of its established practice of seconding resources, or contributing to the staffing of the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests. Since 2012, the secretariat has benefited from a secondment from FAO to contribute to forest reporting and other technical areas. That arrangement is expected to continue through most of 2013.

66. The operational enhancements made to the Partnership have included the addition in 2011 of a Vice-Chair position and function to its organizational structure. The International Tropical Timber Organization was appointed Vice-Chair from July 2011 to December 2011. UNEP was then appointed from January 2012 to July 2012, a term that was subsequently extended to the end of December 2012. Accordingly, at the Partnership meeting in December 2012, it was decided to extend the term of the Vice-Chair to 12 months. The Vice-Chairs for the coming three years will be the International Union of Forest Research Organizations in 2013, the International Council for Research in Agroforestry in 2014 and the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in 2015. When necessary, the Chair can delegate the chairing of a meeting first to the Vice-Chair and then to any other Partnership member.

67. Meetings of the Partnership in 2011 and 2012 were held back-to-back with other key events, in different locations, where a majority of members could participate. Teleconferences on targeted issues were also introduced throughout the biennium. Summary reports of all Partnership meetings are available on its website.